



# Viewer's Guide

This guide was produced in partnership with the **National Education Association**



## EPISODE 5

# Mastering 'Silent e' and Becoming More Fluent with Michael, Third Grader

**Video length:** 18 minutes

**Watch the video here:** [ReadingRockets.org/interventions/silent-e-pattern-with-michael-third-grade](https://www.readingrockets.org/interventions/silent-e-pattern-with-michael-third-grade)

## Michael's profile

Michael is a third grader who reads single syllable short vowel words accurately but slowly. He is not a guesser. He has difficulty reading words with 'silent e' spellings.



## Video overview

Michael learns a strategy to help him accurately read single syllable words with the 'silent e' long vowel spelling pattern.

Michael's teacher is Ms. Farrell. She is a reading specialist and educational consultant working with Michael for the first time. The video clips of Michael are taken from a 25-minute lesson.

Ms. Farrell's lesson is purposefully not from any program. She and Michael demonstrate a strategy that can work with any program. To prepare for the lesson, Ms. Farrell compiled lists of one-syllable words with short vowel spellings (closed syllables) and 'silent e' spellings. She also found passages that include words with short vowel spellings and 'silent e' spellings.

## Ms. Farrell's lesson plan is to:

1. Check to make sure Michael knows the short and long vowel sounds, that he can break words into sounds, and label the vowel sound in each word. These are prerequisite skills necessary to succeed with the strategy she will teach him.
2. Teach the strategy for accurately reading 'silent e' words.
3. Give Michael practice using the strategy reading words in isolation.
4. Give Michael practice using the strategy reading a passage.



## Things to notice while watching the video

- As you watch the video, notice Ms. Farrell's style of instruction.
- She always guides Michael and never gives him the answer.
- She does **not teach** vocabulary.
- When Michael makes a mistake, she responds by telling him what part of his response is correct, then guides him to the correct answer.
- She encourages Michael to use the 'touch with your finger' strategy when he makes a mistake.
- She gives Michael plenty of time to think without interrupting him.
- When Michael misreads a word, he always finishes by reading the word accurately one or more times.

## Questions to consider while viewing the video the first time

1. At the beginning of the video how does Michael read the text with single syllable, short vowel words?
2. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Michael to say each of the short vowel sounds and the long vowel sounds?
3. What does Michael do the first time Ms. Farrell asks him for the vowel sound in the word *back*? Why?
4. What are the multisensory anchors that Ms. Farrell gives Michael for the short vowel and 'silent e' long vowel spellings?
5. How does Ms. Farrell make sure that Michael can use the anchors to read accurately?
6. After Michael can read all the words in one row with touch and say, what does he do next?
7. Why does Ms. Farrell focus on having Michael read accurately to help him with his fluency?

**Answers:** see the next page for the answer key.

Watch the whole "Looking at Reading Interventions" series here:  
[ReadingRockets.org/interventions](http://ReadingRockets.org/interventions)



## Answer key

1. At the beginning of the video how does Michael read the text with single syllable, short vowel words?  
Michael reads the words accurately but slowly. He does not guess any words.
2. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Michael to say each of the short vowel sounds and the long vowel sounds?  
Ms. Farrell is checking to see if Michael knows the short and long vowel sounds because not being able to recognize short and long vowel sounds in spoken words is a major source of decoding confusion.
3. What does Michael do the first time Ms. Farrell asks him for the vowel sound in the word *back*? Why?  
Michael says 'a', the name of the letter, instead of the sound /ă/. Confusion between the sound and the letter name is common for striving readers.
4. What are the multisensory anchors that Ms. Farrell gives Michael for the short vowel and 'silent e' long vowel spellings?  
The anchors are how Michael touches the letters and says the sounds. Ms. Farrell teaches Michael to touch a single vowel letter and read the short sound. She teaches him to touch the 'a' and the 'e' at the same time and to read the long vowel sound. Using the anchors helps Michael see the vowel and 'silent e' as one spelling unit and associate it with the long vowel sound compared to the one vowel letter he associates with the short vowel sound.
5. How does Ms. Farrell make sure that Michael can use the anchors to read accurately?  
First, he practices touching and saying the vowel sound in six words, but he doesn't read the words.  
Next, he touches and says each sound in the word, then reads the word.  
Finally, he touches and says the vowel sound, then he reads the word. This is hard for Michael, and he practices it twice with the six words before he can do it reading the words accurately.
6. After Michael can read all the words in one row with touch and say, what does he do next?  
Michael reads words in a row without using touch and say.  
After he reads words in a row accurately without using touch and say, he then reads a passage that has some words with 'silent e' and some words with short vowels.
7. Why does Ms. Farrell focus on having Michael read accurately to help him with his fluency?  
Ms. Farrell knows that accuracy is the first step to developing fluency. Once accuracy is an established habit, a student can work on reading at a faster rate without having to make a conscious effort not to guess.